

WYCOMBE WANDERERS arrived back from their end of season tour to Cyprus on Sunday with two victories and a defeat, including a notable 1-0 success against a team from the Greek League, Hapoel.

The Blues, skippered by Keith Mead, travelled to Dhali, some 20 miles from Nicosia, with a population of three and a half thousand for their first game. In temperatures up in the 80's the Blues were playing on a composition pitch, bone hard despite a recent watering.

Taking their time to settle, they had to combat Dhali's possession tactics of playing the ball square across the field. The through ball, a feature of the tourists' style, was virtually non-existent as passes were difficult to measure. As the half progressed, Wycombe began to carve out chances but both Tony Horseman and Dylan Evans wasted scoring opportunities.

Just before the interval the home side went ahead when a speculative drive from their left back went in off Kevin Raine's upright from 30 yards. Wanderers had no time to think about a reply until after the break. Soon into the new half Howard Kennedy, one of the guests on tour, almost put his side on level terms when he fired in a tremendous shot from 25 yards only to see it cannon off the post.

Kennedy, who has had experience with Leeds United and Burnley, is taking up a teaching position in High Wycombe next season.

After 70 minutes the Blues fell further behind when Raine failed to cut out a corner, the ball sailing straight into the net to put Dhali 2-0 ahead. The second goal came after a good deal of Wycombe pressure but lack of finish saw their build-ups wasted.

Two minutes before the end of the game, Wanderers pulled back to 1-2 thanks to Tony Horseman, who stabbed the ball home from close range. The match, watched by only 250 people, was disappointing for the tourists in many ways. A delay on the outgoing flight could well have had something to do with their performance. They did not arrive in Cyprus until 2.30 in the morning and had little time to get acclimatised.

The team for the Dhali match was: K. Raine; P. Griffith, J. Lailey, K. Mead, R. Eaton; G. Mackenzie (sub T. Reardon), H. Kennedy, M. Holifield; A. Horseman, D. Evans, A. Price.

The second encounter was the most difficult of the tour — against Hapoel, the Greek League, Division One club who travel to Greece every week to play their matches. The game, staged in the national stadium, was watched by a partisan crowd of about 550 people, some of whom burnt paper on the terraces after the match, when their team had been beaten 1-0. Once again the Blues were faced with a hard ground but the weather was cooler as the game was played in the evening under floodlights. Even then, the temperatures were in the 70's. Early on, the home side threw all they had at Wycombe but thanks to consistent defensive work by Julian Lailey and Mead, they withstood the onslaught.

Wanderers made several changes from the side that lost their first game, one of them being John Maskell for Raine. John handled the ball extremely well and his long goalkicks put immediate pressure on Hapoel.

After 29 minutes Mead headed home a Horseman corner to put the Blues ahead. In the second period, Wanderers suffered a severe setback when Keith Searle was forced to leave the field with a re-occurrence of his knee injury that plagued him for much of last season. The injury resulted from a 50-50 tackle and ruled the centre forward out for the rest of the tour.

Tony Price substituted and proceeded to turn on some exciting foot-ball but Hapoel themselves always looked likely to pull back an equaliser. They used three substitutes during the game but were unable to break through Wycombe's resolute back four. For the Blues, Steve Perrin, Mick Holifield and Terry Reardon all went close, the latter clipping the crossbar late in the game.

Wycombe: J. Maskell; P. Griffith, J. Lailey, K. Mead, R. Eaton; R. Kennedy, T. Reardon, M. Holifield; A. Horseman, K. Searle (sub A. Price), S. Perrin.

After a break of a couple of days, Wanderers lined up for the third and final match of the tour — against Anorthosis. The match, unlike the two previous encounters, was played on the coast in Famagusta and the sea breeze made conditions easier for the tourists. This obviously had a great effect on Steve Perrin, who went on to record a fine hat-trick in a 4-0 victory.

Wycombe, by this time well used to the type of conditions, dominated the game and were always in command. The standard of refereeing, somewhat biased in the first two matches, was much improved, the referee being on the F.I.F.A. list.

Evans, Reardon and Mackenzie all tested the home goalkeeper before the Blues went ahead after 25 minutes when Ray Eaton, who was one of the stars of the tour, crossed into the box for Perrin to open the scoring with a header. Despite their pressure, the 1-0 scoreline stood after 45 minutes.

Eaton, the Enfield and England full back, was a constant threat on the flanks to the home side while Mick Holifield produced many telling bursts of speed and excelled in all three matches to be later singled out as the player of the tour by assistant manager John Reardon.

Three late goals finally sealed the game. Perrin nipped in to rob the full back and grab the second while "Bodger" Horseman ran 30 yards to beat one defender and the goalkeeper for the third. Perrin completed his hat-trick with the final goal.

Wycombe: J. Maskell, (sub K. Raine) T. Reardon, J. Lailey, K. Mead, R. Eaton (sub P. Griffith); G. Mackenzie, H. Kennedy, M. Holifield; D. Evans, S. Perrin, A. Price (sub A. Horseman).

One disappointment about the tour was that Wycombe former captain John Delaney, who last year signed for Third Division Bournemouth, was unable to join his old team-mates as planned due to a last minute hitch. New Bournemouth manager Trevor Hartley refused permission for John to play any of the matches. Young Paul Griffith took his place.

Wanderers came back with an impressive list of silverware, including two trophies presented after their first two matches.